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The Mountains of Scripture: Sinai

Alan Davidson, North Ireland

Moses Saw the Pattern

"And look that thou make them after the pattern, which was showed thee in the mount." Ex 25:40

Moses spent two-thirds of his life upon mountains. From Horeb to Sinai, to Hur, to Pisgah, ascending experiences led this man of God on to the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. When Moses was on the mountain he got the pattern of the House. This pattern was from heaven. At the same time, Aaron was at the bottom of the mountain and he made a golden calf. He got his pattern from Egypt. May we be preserved from ever-changing the pattern of *"the house of God, which is the church of the living God"* 1 Tim. 3:15 to the confusing patterns of things we see in the world around us.

The pattern was of materials that were **costly**. *"Gold, and silver, and brass"* Ex 25:3. Do we build on the beautiful wealth of redemption or the cheap bulky products of earth; *"wood, hay, stubble"*? 1 Cor. 3:12.

The pattern was of outstanding **beauty**. White linen contrasted with the dust of the desert. Rich hues of beauty marked the fabrics. Shining copper, crests of silver, the awesome aspect of pure gold reflected the glory of the sanctuary. First impressions of the assembly should be the beautiful white linen of clean testimony and righteous living. 1 Cor. 14:25.

The pattern of the House was marked by **centrality**. The House was the focal point of daily life, the center around which they camped. *"Where two or three are gathered together in my*

name, there am I in the midst of them". Matt. 18:20. Does our life revolve around the assembly, the priority of gathering, of our service, our homes, and our daily life? Does the family understand that it is the right thing to go to the meetings?

The pattern was Heavenly yet of **simplicity**. The curtains and walls were in straight lines. No one was running round in circles. The Mercy Seat of Sovereignty and the Table of Privilege were of the same height. The spices were tempered together of like weight speaking of the careful blend of the preparations of the Person and Work of Christ. The positioning of the Tabernacle was always facing east, the rising of the sun. The application is to us who are *"looking for that Blessed Hope"*. Tit. 2:13.

The boards were positioned in a pattern of **unity**. The boards of shittim wood from the forest were made straight, overlaid with gold, and fitted perfectly together in the pattern which Moses saw. Believers who never see the scriptural pattern of the local church of God are scattered and sadly spread about in denominationalism. Do we see our brethren and sisters united in assembly fellowship and covered in the gold of God's Divine handiwork? If so, we will be less critical of them. *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine"* Eph. 4:14.

It was a pattern of **dignity**. *"Speak unto the children of Israel (children of a Prince with God)"* Ex. 25:2. They were marked out from the nations because God was among them. The dignity of His Lordship and Headship distinguishes the Churches of God. Many have never seen this distinction 1 Cor. 11:3-16.

The house functioned in an order that was **priestly**. *"Aaron...and his sons...in the priests office"* Ex. 28:1. The priests wore no shoes. Priests only look up. We have such a High Priest who has gone in--Heb. 9:24. Clerisy and the paid pastor system is contrary to the priesthood of all believers. *"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually"* Heb. 13:15. There is a great need for

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Editor and Publisher: Joel Portman
1200 Forest Glen Ct. SE,
Cedar Rapids, IA, 52403
Write to: mail@truthsforourday.com

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priests who can uplift Christ before the people of God.

There was a **mystery** about the pattern. No measurements are given for the Lampstand. No shape is stated for the laver. There is a mystery about the corner boards as seen in different models of the tabernacle. Only Moses saw the prototype. We get the clear pattern from the scriptures yet spiritually men and women of wisdom and vision are needed to function in the assemblies today. *"not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual"* 1 Cor. 2:13.

Moses received a pattern of great **diversity**. *"Ram's skins dyed red, and badgers' skins and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense. Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod"* Ex. 25:5-7. The true pattern required metals, fabrics, wood, spices, precious stones, many colors, and sweet fragrance. How diverse are the exercises of a godly assembly. *"diversities of gifts, but of the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord"* 1 Cor. 12:4-5. The New Testament assembly differs from the deadness of organized ritual, the stagnation of empty formality or the denominationalism of religion that has a name to live and is dead.

An outstanding feature of the pattern was that was **holy**. The Holy Place was distinct from the Most Holy. The ark covered by the mercy seat formed one vessel in the holiest. The ark with no mercy seat would have been a Throne of Judgment. Supreme in the Holy exercises of the House of God is the collective gathering to *"shew the Lord's death till He come"* 1 Cor. 11:26.

Moses never needed to change the pattern. It was marked by **finality**. From Sinai to Gilgal, through the desert and into the land, each time the congregation rested, the sons of Levi placed the vessels, the pillars, and the pins, each in its own Divinely appointed place. Divine order needs no addition and no alteration. The same pattern continues in the book of the Revelation. The Lampstands ch. 2&3, the Laver ch. 4, the Altar ch. 5, the Golden Altar ch. 8, and the Ark ch. 11. *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men"* Rev. 21:3.

The vision on the mountain gave Moses the pattern which when it was finished manifested outstanding **Glor**y. *“So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the **glory** of the Lord filled the tabernacle”*, Ex. 40:33-34. A simple godly assembly of the Lord’s people can today be to the wonder of angels, the amazement of unbelievers and the glory of God. *“And so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth”*, 1 Cor. 14:25.

(continued)

God loves His children too well to give them their way; when He crosses them He studies their real welfare; crosses are often more comfortable than comforts.

Knowing God, pt 1

Joel Portman

We don't usually quote creeds of religious organizations, but the first question and answer of the Shorter Westminster Catechism is worth noticing. It says,

“What is the chief end of man?”

“Man’s chief end is to glorify God,
and to enjoy him for ever.”

This is a short but proper answer to the most important question of all time. If we are to understand our lives, why we live, and what is their most important purpose, we need to recognize that knowing God and glorifying Him stands as the more important of all. The author of Ecclesiastes describes the futility and emptiness of a life that is lived simply “under the sun” without spiritual desires and purpose, and simply living for self. Whether rich or poor, wise or foolish, or even in power or weakness, life is an empty existence that has no future or value. What a nation thinks about God is vital to its welfare. The same holds for every person or assembly. Our thoughts about God will determine our values, the direction of our lives, reasons for motives, or even the character of

those lives. Those who have a faulty knowledge, or no knowledge, of God, cannot find the true purpose for their lives, nor can they fulfill God's will in their actions. If all depends on natural processes over countless eons of time rather than the action of a God who is all-powerful and infinite in every aspect of His person, then God can be shut out of his thoughts. But if so, then he becomes, as the psalmist says in Ps. 14:1, only a fool, one devoid of wisdom and true understanding. He is the man described in Ps. 49:20, *“Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.”* God has made man in such a way that he can never be satisfied or fulfilled without knowing God and worshiping Him as He deserves.

There is a great lack today, even among genuine Christians, of a genuine desire to know God. We may profess much more than we actually possess, and this is sad since it may cause us to be satisfied with less than we should enjoy. We may get in a spiritual rut so that we fail to realize that God's desires for our salvation are far more than the delivery of our souls from hell. Sadly, a rut can be little more than a grave for many. But the purpose of our salvation is that we might know Him and Jesus Christ who He has sent (John 17:4). We may be satisfied to know some things about God, but that is not knowing Him, because this form of knowledge is one that brings us into a close relationship with Him as a real person. A knowledge of truth and godliness in our lives isn't the same either. Even knowing the Bible and being able to deliver a good message is no substitute for knowing God. We may have all these good qualities and still miss what is most essential. God made man as a distinct creation with the spiritual capacity to know Him, to glorify Him, and to enjoy personal fellowship with Him who is the only One who can satisfy the heart and fill the soul with joy.

God's Dealings with Israel

We notice that God dealt with Israel continually on this point. We see that He revealed Himself to them when they were still in Egypt. His purpose in their deliverance was to bring them to Himself (Exo. 19:4) to make them a people that would function in a direct relationship with

Him as priests. Moses' last words to Israel in Deuteronomy were an appeal to them to *"love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."* (Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 11:1,13,22;13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20). Sadly, they failed to realize the importance of holding Jehovah in their hearts and maintaining a holy condition in their lives so that they could function in that privilege and enjoyment of being a nation that was wholly set apart to Him.

We see a continually-repeated pattern in their history that began early in their wilderness journey. In his defense, Stephen reminds them of their practice of maintaining the worship of idols even during that period (Acts 7:43) and their act of denying the Lord and building the idolatrous calf at Mt. Sinai. Early after Joshua's death they began to turn to idolatry and forsook the Lord. Jer. 2:13 charges them, *"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."* What is idolatry, but taking the revealed truths of God and seeking to contain them in broken cisterns of human thinking? They are only stale containers of truth that cannot refresh the spirit. John closes his first epistle by warning his reader, *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"* and in the context, he is speaking about wrong notions about God that the Gnostic heretics were proclaiming. We need that admonition even today!

The Lord Jesus, in the New Testament, continually combated the hypocritical legalism of the Jews in their religious belief and practice. They, like others, had become satisfied with formal, dead observances that were correct in many ways but which were missing the reality of a relationship with God and the blessedness of that experience. It shows that men can continue in a formal practice of orthodoxy and yet fail miserably to realize what God's purposes are in His gracious movements toward them. This is also a problem that has always existed and still continues in our day.

There is always a need for believers to consciously return to a deliberate effort to engage in and enjoy the quietness and solitude of seeking to know God with all our hearts. This involves Meditation that is directed by God's

Word and has the purpose of bringing our souls and spirits into a closer relationship with Him. We live in a busy, materialistic world that is occupied with "things" that press in and crowd out this most important issue from our lives. There must be a deliberate seeking for and searching after this particular goal and a willingness to deal with all that would hinder its accomplishment. We need to meditate on the words of David in Ps. 42:1-2, *"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"* And it must be not for what we would gain from it, though we would gain much more than we realize, but to recognize the reality of God and seeking to know Him because He is truly worthy to be known! This is true theology, a personal knowledge of God that is engaged in simply because He is who He is and because He deserves that place in our hearts, thoughts, and lives. Anything less is to dishonor Him and it also degrades human life, because that is not what He made man to be. It is the result of sin that has pervaded the human scene and robbed God of His due honor.

Importance and Value of Knowing God

There are many reasons for one to seek this knowledge of God. The first is that this is the primary purpose of creation. God said in Gen. 1:26-27 that He would make man *"in our image, after our likeness..."* so that His creative work resulted in beings that have the capacity to respond to God and to know Him. Man was created for God's glory, not to increase His glory but to display it (Isa. 43:7, 1 Cor. 11:7). God has no necessities and needs nothing, so this wasn't the reason for man's creation. It was God's determination to make man out of His own will, and we are best to not inquire with our limited minds into why God made man thus. So man has a spiritual capacity to be a suitable companion for God, and though we cannot say definitely that God came down regularly into the garden to commune with Adam (since it never says that in scripture), we know that there was that capacity on man's part that isn't shared by any other creature. Yet when sin entered by Adam's disobedience (Rom. 5:12), that proper enjoyment of the

Creator-creature relationship was ruined so that it cannot be enjoyed as God intended without the miraculous work of the Spirit in the new birth.

This is also the primary purpose of our salvation. It is wonderful to know and revel in the fact that now being saved, we will never be in hell to suffer for our sins. But that is not the end, only the beginning. If we end there, we have missed the reason for which such an infinite price was paid for our deliverance. God has made us *"a new creation in Christ Jesus"* (2 Cor. 5:17, Col. 3:10) so that we might be recovered to that spiritual state (and more) that enables a creature to enjoy a relationship with his Creator. It is a "birth from above" as we read in John 3. This isn't only the purpose of salvation, but it is, in a sense, the essence of salvation. John's first epistle emphasizes the importance of knowing God and of holding correct truths and doctrines concerning Him. We read in 1 John 5:20, *"And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."* So that any false ideas or concepts of God must be avoided as heresies.

It is also the primary purpose of the Bible. We read in Ps. 19 that God has used (and uses) two means to reveal Himself to men. One is His marvelous creation (Ps. 19:1-6) and the other is the wonderful Word of God (Ps. 19:7-14). Those two means are repeated and emphasized in the first two chapters of Romans. In Romans 1, it is creation in which man has corrupted the knowledge of God, since *"..that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse..."* In Romans 2, Paul emphasizes man's responsibility because of the clear teaching of the Word when he speaks of those who know the law, yet fail to keep the law and are thus proven to be sinners before God. In that Word, Christ is also revealed who is God manifest in flesh, and the Bible has been given so that in it we might discern the Person Who has chosen to

reveal Himself to man. We should never read the Bible and forget this vital truth. We must seek to see Him when we read His Word. We should have the same attitude or prayer as Moses had when he said, *"I beseech thee, shew me thy glory"* (Exo. 33:18). With that attitude of heart, we will learn of Him when we read His Word.

We can also say that God orders our life's experiences so that through them He might display Himself to us in a personal way. It is startling to realize that He is not so much concerned about our creature comforts. It is actually the aim of the god of this world to make man as comfortable as possible and to remove from his life anything that would make him think about God, his own frailty and dependence, or eternity. God works for our highest good, which is to know Him, and He may even use suffering, trials, deprivations, or loss of material benefits to accomplish this. It was in the fiery furnace that the three young men knew the reality of God's presence with them in Daniel 3. It is in such trials of life that a believer experiences the nearness of God in a very real way. If necessary, He will use those means to produce the kind of spiritual condition in us that He desires, and we only risk losing that great blessing when we insulate ourselves from anything of this nature. In a sense not often realized, our modern conveniences that we all enjoy serve to insulate us from the sense of our dependence on God for everything.

(will be continued)

He that gives up truth today, will be prepared to forsake Christ tomorrow, unless God steps in with His special grace.

Abraham (Gen.17)

Silence of God

Larry Steers

There are three countries in the experience of Abraham as presented in the Hebrew Epistle. First, The Country of His Salvation (11:8,15). Second, The Country of His Sojourn where he was a stranger in his relationship to

the idolatrous inhabitants surrounding him (11:9). Thirdly, The Country of His Search (11:16), a heavenly country, as a pilgrim going to a better land. As pilgrims like the ancient patriarch can we sing meaningfully the words written by Henry F. Lyte:

“It is not for me to be seeking my bliss,
And building my hopes in a region like this;
I look for a city which hands have not piled;
I pant for a country by sin undefiled”.

We will look further at Abraham dwelling in the country of his sojourn.

Abraham had been chosen out of the multitude of heathen idolators who dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees. Into the soul of a lonely pilgrim, God had poured staggering promises. These promises may have appeared to others of Abraham’s day as impossible of fulfillment, and so, insignificant; but to the stranger in their midst the promises of God were tremendous.

To the pilgrim stranger, after the departure of Lot, God instructed *“Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever”* (Gen. 13:14 -15). Staggering!

But even further, God also promised that out of his loins would spring forth a unique seed (Gen. 12:7), innumerable as the stars of heaven and as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16). From one man would spring a great nation (Gen. 12:2).

Vast promises had been made to a sojourner on earth by a God who could not fail. The scope of the area his seed would possess would stretch from the river of Egypt, the Nile, to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18).

No doubt Abraham’s soul was flooded with wonder, even if he did comprehend a little of the marvelous character of what God had promised. How were the promises to be fulfilled? As time passed and they grew older, Sarah had given birth to no seed. Abraham questioned God, *“I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?”* (Gen. 15:2). But God had promised a seed that would come from his

bowels (Gen. 16:1-16). Hence the scheme of unbelief and the resulting birth of Ishmael.

How vitally significant to notice carefully that between Gen. 16:16 and the birth of Ishmael, to the word from God in Gen. 17:1 there are thirteen silent years. At the birth of Ishmael (Gen. 16:16), Abraham was 86 years old. At the commencement of chapter 17, he is 99 years old. For these thirteen long years, there is no promise or recorded communication from God. Heaven is silent.

There is a great truth impressed upon the friend of God during those silent years. Because Abraham took matters into his own hands, silence is punitive in character; but it is also educative. God needs no help from anyone but will keep what He has promised, and carry on His work in His own time and in His own way.

The silence also tried the faith of Abraham. Certainly, there is a needed lesson for today. God does not need our organizing and appointment. The more that can be left to our God and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit the greater will be our harvest of eternal blessings.

At the conclusion of those years of silence the voice of God is again heard, the covenant renewed, and the seed again promised. But it is even more vital at this juncture of Abraham’s life. With Abraham prostrate on his face *“God talked with him”* (17:3). After the silent years it is recorded five times that *“God said”* (vs. 1,3,9,15,19). From verse 1 of the chapter to verse 22, God is speaking.

An aged servant of the Lord stood on a conference platform and said, *“If I had my life to live over again I would spend more time getting to know my God”* (Mr. Andrew Douglas).

In 2020 our unspeakable privilege, like Abraham, is to speak to God and listen as He speaks to us through His word. Do we sing how it is a pure delight to spend a single hour in the presence of God and can only spare a few minutes? But also, it is beyond words to express the value of time reading and meditating on the Word of God. These are blessed moments for as we delight to spend precious time in His word He speaks through the word to us. He expects that we not only delight in His word but move in daily life in obedience to it. When we fail in delighting to

live in the light of and obedience to the precious truth revealed, we are exposed to the danger of heaven being silent.

Further deeper truth will now be unfolded to the soul of Abraham. The silence ends and God will speak, not so much about His promises (though He will repeat them), but He reveals Himself, His character, and person. He does this by introducing to Abraham four great titles of God.

Recall the words of the Saviour to His own *"And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God"* (John 17:3). Here, the words are to His own, that they and we might have an increasing knowledge of God. Could we stand in Abraham's shoes for a moment and embrace the greatness and wonder of our God? The God who communicated to Abraham is our God.

First, God speaks as **LORD** (v.1). LORD is Jehovah, the eternal one. This radiates in all of its beauty the personal name of God. Isaiah recalls God introducing Himself *"I am the LORD, that is My name"* (Isa. 42:8). The unfailing, self-existent Lord enters into a covenant relationship with a failing earthly man, Abraham. This Lord demands complete surrender with total confidence that every promise will be perfectly fulfilled. Failing Abraham will have a son.

Second, God speaks as the **"I AM"** (v.1), the unchanging one. At the commencement of the Revelation the Saviour introduces Himself as "I am" five times (1:8,11,17,18-twice). When all of the cataclysmic events recorded in the following chapters have run their course He remains the "I am" twice (21:6, 22:13). This grand truth is grandly expressed by the Hebrew writer, *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever"* (Heb. 13:8). When the children of Israel would ask Moses who sent him his response would be *"I am that I am hath sent me"* (Ex. 3:14). Abraham should have confidence that the "I am" would fulfill His promise.

Third, Abraham's God was **"the Almighty God"** (v.1), El Shadday, meaning He is all-powerful. The all-sufficient, all-powerful El Shadday will fulfill His purposes, keeping every promise made. The Lord Jesus Christ, who possesses every attribute of deity instructed His

disciples before returning to heaven: *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"* (Matt. 28:18).

Fourth, God is **Elohim**, the most often used name which appears ten times in this chapter. We find Elohim first in Gen. 1, the God of creation. David reminds us of the majesty of Elohim when he writes *"The heavens declare the glory of God (Elohim) and the firmament sheweth his handywork"* (Psa. 19:1).

Abraham had been given great promises but now God has unfolded to the Patriarch the greatness of Himself.

Abraham has been clearly instructed, *"Walk before me and be thou perfect"* (v.1), that is before El Shadday. In the context of the chapter "perfect" is to accept without question the promises of an unfailing God. It would be impossible to walk with God and deny His word.

Down through the corridors of time, these solemn words along with the revelation of God and with the unfolding of Divine character should flood the heart and soul of every believer. Our walk before God, our manner of life in every detail is *"naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do"* (Heb. 4:13).

To walk with God implies unhindered communion, no sin, no cloud in the life. In a difficult day, Enoch walked with God (Gen. 5:22) and *"was not for God took him"* (Gen. 5:23). What a moment for Enoch to take one step on earth and the next step into the presence of God. What an encouragement for today when we may take one last step on this earth, and the next step into the presence of our Lord at the rapture.

The Lord, as He walked with two on the road to Emmaus, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Later they acknowledged *"Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way"* (Luke 24:32).

Reverence is embedded in the soul of Abraham as he falls on his face before his God. The promises are renewed. His wife was to give birth to a son.

In that precious moment, the old problem of doubt arises. The laughter of verse 17 represents unbelief that has crept back into his soul. We hear him again, and at the moment

when God has wondrously revealed Himself, *"Shall a son be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear?"* (Gen. 17:17). God has said yes! Our God will never fail. He will keep His word.

Honor God by trusting Him, and He will honor you by giving you what you need, delivering you from what you fear, or using you to accomplish what you desire. "Them that honor Me I will honor."

"He is Lord of All"

Dr. H. A. Cameron

The day of Pentecost has fully come. Devout men from every nation under heaven are in Jerusalem. One hundred and twenty disciples of the Lord Jesus are praying in the upper room. A great event is imminent. All are in expectation. The stage is set. The participants are ready. When suddenly from heaven is heard the sound of a rushing mighty wind, the house is shaken, the Christians are Spirit-indwelt, tongues of fire are seen upon them and they speak with tongues. Going out upon the streets into the midst of Jerusalem they have at once a use for the divinely imparted gift, and soon men from such widely separated countries as Elam in the east and Rome in the west, men who cannot understand each other because they have been brought up to speak different languages—these men hear in the tongue in which they were born the wonderful works of God; and the most marvelous feature of this strange experience is that these who speak to them in their mother tongue, far from their native land, are all Galileans who have never visited their country nor studied their language. To them, it is a mystery, but Peter, standing up with the twelve, solves the problem for them in words they never forget, ending his address with this astounding conclusion: *"Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God had made that same Jesus, whom ye have*

crucified, both Lord and Christ." Not Christ or Messiah only, but Lord also. Many had come saying that they fulfilled the scriptures which foretold the coming of the Messiah, but they had proved to be false in their claims. But this One whom Peter announces is not only the true, because God-acknowledged, Messiah; He is more—He is Lord as well as Christ. Demons had acknowledged Him as the Messiah, and Son of the Most High God. The angels had announced Him not only as a Saviour, but as Messiah the LORD. Now God proclaims Him such.

"That same Jesus." What Jesus is thus signalized by these divine honors? That same Jesus whom ye insulted as a Samaritan, whose words ye attributed to demon-possession, whose works ye said were done through Beelzebub; that Jesus whom ye crucified as a malefactor, whom ye set at naught, whom ye despised, whom ye taunted upon the cross, saying *"Himself He cannot save"* whom ye maligned as "hat deceiver"; that same Jesus was your promised and long-looked-for Messiah. God hath made Him such. Listen to your own Scriptures fulfilled in Him. First of all, God raised Him from the dead, the only Man to rise with the power of an endless life. This was foretold in the sixteenth Psalm. David indeed wrote that Psalm, but it is clear that the words never applied to David, but to the Holy One, who (unlike David) did not see corruption though placed in a grave, the One whom God brought from death by the way of life into His presence full of gladness. David's body saw corruption; he was never resurrected; he has not yet ascended (so far as his body is concerned) into Heaven. His tomb is with us to this day. But David spake of the Messiah, and the only One that ever fulfilled to the letter the Messianic scriptures was that one whose body did not see corruption, whose soul was brought back from Hades, even Jesus, for God raised Him from the dead. We are eye-witnesses to that fact, for we saw Him and ate and drank with Him after His resurrection. And He has gone to the right hand of God, the proof of which is before your eyes, for He has sent from that presence the Holy Spirit, the evidence of which ye both see and hear. And this Jesus who is now

exalted to God's right hand is your Messiah, but He is more. Listen again. David says, *"The Lord said unto my LORD, Sit Thou on my right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."* He is more than the predicted Messiah: He is divine; He is Lord. Him whom ye rejected, making Him out to be a deceiver, God hath accepted, acknowledging that He is both Lord and Messiah.

The argument was invincible. Peter's words were the *"words which the Holy Ghost teacheth,"* and they went home to the heart, with the result that three thousand believed that Jesus was not only the Messiah, but that He was also the Lord, and they were baptized unto His name as such.

He is Lord. But is He the Lord of the Jews only? Is He not also Lord of the Gentiles? Again Peter is honored to be the mouth-piece for God, for unto Cornelius and his company he declares that *"Jesus Christ is Lord of all."* As he preaches Jesus and the resurrection, and announces remission of sins to *"whosoever (Jew or Gentile) believeth in Him"* these Gentiles believe and are baptized *"in the name of the Lord"* and thus He becomes as Paul later puts it, *"Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."*

But is He the Lord of the living only? Is He not Lord of the dead also? Truly of the righteous dead, He is Lord also, for we read (Romans 14:7) *"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live we live unto the Lord; and whether we die we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord of the dead and the living."* By the "we" and "us" we see that Christians are the persons spoken of here.

Note first that He is Lord of the living saints. We are not our own, we are bought with a price; we are purchased as slaves were to serve a master. We should live not to serve ourselves but to serve Him who purchased us with His own blood. He is our Lord as long as we live, for He is Lord of the living. We should be willing to live, therefore, and not long for death, for in life only is it possible to do certain acts of service. Only during our lifetime can we be ministers of the Gospel and

ministers of the Church. Only in life can we hold forth the word of life. Only in life can we be ambassadors for Christ, and have the privilege of beseeching men in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Only in life can we be the servants of the Church, addicting ourselves to the ministry of the saints, striving for the high honor of being servants of all. No wonder is it therefore that Paul thanked God that Epaphroditus' life was spared, saying that *"God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also"*: mercy on Epaphroditus, for he spared him for further service to Paul, to the Philippians, and to Christ, and therefore, spared him to receive greater wages and gather more fruit unto life eternal. It is not a healthy sign to be always wanting to die; it is normal to wish to live. If Epaphroditus had died on the road while carrying the Philippians' gift to Paul, he would indeed have exchanged a toilsome and dangerous journey for sweet rest in the presence of his Lord, but his days of earthly service would then be over. We understand therefore how God had mercy on him in that He extended his days to years, the Lord of the living prolonging his life for further service and opportunity for reward. And in this act He had mercy on Paul also, for "sorrow upon sorrow" would have been his had he been deprived of the companionship, sympathy, prayers, and fellowship, of the beloved Epaphroditus.

But this teaches us also our responsibility. "Would'st thou live long? Then be careful of thy time for that is what life is made of." This is one of the world's sayings, but it is a true one. Wasted time is wasted life. "redeeming the time" is commanded. This has been rendered "buying up the opportunity," which has been explained in modern phraseology as "cornering the market". Just as men purchase every bushel of wheat or bale of cotton that they can lay hands on to get the best profit, the Lord says, Do that with your opportunities in time and thus save your lives.

Lives are shortened not only by the waste of time, but also by the waste of health and strength and tissue; by injury to the body. Foolishly jeopardizing one's life by exposing it

needlessly to danger, or wilfully committing suicide would deny the Lordship of Christ. Christ is the Lord of the living Christian. But while most would shrink from shortening their lives by unnecessary risks or deliberate self-destruction, yet many do not live out their days through self-indulgence in gratifying the desires of the body. The quantity and quality of food and drink and clothing, too much or too little sleep, lethargy on the one hand due to laziness, and excessive work on the other due to covetousness, are necessary points for study and observance or avoidance on the part of the Christian.

Contrariwise, however, no matter how important the conservation of life is, the Christian should be willing to lay down his life if need be for Christ. No toil in His service can be too excessive, no exposure of the body nor expenditure of strength can ever be too great if the occasion or circumstances demand; yea even life should not be counted dear to the believer when the honor of His Lord or faithfulness to Him are in question. This is the demand of the Lord Jesus from true disciples--"his own life also." Paul was the great exemplar of it. Labors, stripes, prisons, deaths oft, beating with rods, stoning, shipwreck, journeyings often, perils of every kind, weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fasting, cold, nakedness, were his guerdon here, and when certain death stared him in the face, his answer was "*I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" And die he did, a victim of Nero, the unrighteous judge, but committing himself to the Lord, the righteous Judge. Martyrdom is rare in our day at least in Christendom; but there are those both in Christendom and heathendom, who are gladly spending and being spent, and even laying down their lives for Christ whose they are and whom they serve. This is our reasonable service, for He is Lord of the living.

(to be continued)

Oh, for grace to cast every care, **as soon as it arises**, on Him who bare all our sin, and who now will bear all the sorrow!

**Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this Thy grace must give.**

**If Life be long, I will be glad,
That I may long obey;
If short, yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?**

**Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before;
He that into God's kingdom comes,
Must enter by this door.**

**Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet
Thy blessed face to see;
For if Thy work on earth be sweet,
What will Thy glory be?**

**Then shall I end my sad complaints
And weary sinful days,
And join with the triumphant saints
Who sing Jehovah's praise.**

**My knowledge of that life is small;
The eye of faith is dim:
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.**

Richard Baxter

Disciples' Prayer

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher,
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified,
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me.

Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire,
the passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

A. C.